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Letter dated 6 October 2015 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the Ministerial Declaration adopted at the thirty-ninth annual meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the States members of the Group of 77, held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 24 September 2015 (see annex).

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I would appreciate if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly,

under agenda items 9, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 37, 38, 42, 46, 66, 69, 70, 71, 73, 79, 82, 108, 116, 122, 123, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 138 and 148.

(*Signed*) Kingsley J. N. **Mamabolo**
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of South Africa to the United Nations
Chair of the Group of 77

Annex to the letter dated 6 October 2015 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Ministerial Declaration adopted at the thirty-ninth annual meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the States members of the Group of 77

New York, 24 September 2015

The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the States members of the Group of 77 and China met at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 24 September 2015 on the occasion of their thirty-ninth annual meeting. The Ministers reviewed the world economic situation, the recent developments in the world and the particular challenges faced by developing countries. They adopted the following Declaration:

1. The Ministers congratulated the United Nations on its seventieth anniversary and acknowledged the cardinal role of the Group of 77 and China in shaping global social and economic development in order to narrow the gap between developing and developed countries. The Ministers acknowledged this pivotal role of the Group of 77 and China in a context that requires a renewed focus on global economic governance reform for the concrete implementation of sustainable development.

2. The Ministers welcomed the outcome document entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", to be adopted by leaders at the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, to be held from 25 to 27 September 2015. The Ministers noted that at the heart of the outcome document is a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 associated targets that build on the foundation of the Millennium Development Goals and the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want", and has as its core objective the eradication of poverty everywhere in all its forms and dimensions, which is an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.

3. The Ministers noted that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reaffirms all the principles of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992, in particular the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. The Ministers noted that the new Agenda is guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including full respect for international law. The Ministers reaffirmed the outcomes of all major United Nations conferences and summits that have laid a solid foundation for sustainable development and have helped to shape the new Agenda. These include the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and of the World Summit for Social Development, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. The Ministers also reaffirmed the follow-up to these conferences, including the outcomes of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries and the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. The Ministers also noted that the new

Agenda is grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international human rights treaties, the Millennium Declaration and the 2005 World Summit Outcome. It is informed by other instruments, such as the Declaration on the Right to Development.

4. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development, namely inclusive economic growth, protection of the environment and social inclusion, in a balanced manner, without emphasizing one over the other.

5. The Ministers highlighted the need to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies free from fear and violence. They recognized that there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.

6. The Ministers stressed the importance of adequate means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and called upon developed countries to agree and commit to a new phase of international cooperation through a strengthened and scaled-up global partnership for development, which should be the centrepiece and anchor for both completing the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals and implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, taking into account the lessons learned from the gaps in the implementation of the Goals.

7. The Ministers recognized that many countries, particularly developing countries, are plagued by the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality.

8. The Ministers reaffirmed the overarching objective of eradication of poverty, which remains the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. They reiterated that poverty eradication is a central imperative of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and emphasized the need to address poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon. They stressed the importance of eradicating poverty "in all its forms and dimensions" in order to truly leave no one behind. The Ministers strongly supported the view that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development should reinforce the commitment of the international community to eradicating poverty by 2030.

9. The Ministers committed to supporting national, regional and international efforts aimed at the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions by 2030, which should be the overarching goal for Governments, assisted by an enabling global environment.

10. The Ministers called upon the United Nations system, in consultation with the international financial institutions, to develop transparent measurements of progress on sustainable development that go beyond per capita income, building on existing initiatives as appropriate. These should recognize the multidimensional nature of poverty and the social, economic and environmental dimensions of domestic output and structural gaps at all levels.

11. The Ministers reaffirmed that achieving women's empowerment and their full and effective participation in all spheres of society is fundamental to the achievement of equality and sustainable development.

12. The Ministers also recognize that the potential of women to engage in, contribute to and benefit from sustainable development as leaders, participants and agents of change has not been fully realized. They support prioritizing measures to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in all spheres of society. They resolve to unlock the potential of women as drivers of sustainable development through many measures and commit to creating an enabling environment for improving the situation of women and girls everywhere, particularly in rural areas and local communities and among indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities.

13. The Ministers committed to ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women in political and economic decision-making and resource allocation, to giving women equal rights with men to economic resources, and to ensuring access to education, finance, information and communications technologies, markets, legal assistance and other basic services, including health-care services, including safe, effective, affordable and acceptable modern methods of family planning.

14. The Ministers recall their respective commitments under General Assembly resolution 61/143 and other relevant resolutions on this matter, recognize that violence against women seriously violates all human rights of women and therefore agree to take action to eliminate all forms of violence, including feminicide and discrimination against women and girls, by means of a more systematic, comprehensive, multisectoral and sustained approach, adequately supported and facilitated by strong institutional mechanisms and financing, through national action plans, including those supported by international cooperation, and, where appropriate, national development plans, including poverty eradication strategies and programme-based and sector-wide approaches.

15. The Ministers stressed the need to promote in particular the economic empowerment of rural women, including through entrepreneurship training and financial inclusion, and to adopt rural development strategies, including budget framework and relevant assessment measures, as well as to ensure that the needs and priorities of rural women and girls are systematically addressed and that they can effectively contribute to poverty and hunger eradication and to food and nutrition security.

16. The Ministers expressed deep concern at the lack of satisfactory progress of social development, especially in the developing world. Stressing that the commitments made 20 years ago have not yielded the desired results, the Ministers nevertheless recognized that serious inroads have been made in the reduction of poverty, particularly for those living in extreme poverty. Efforts to significantly fight poverty have proved to be complex and have also largely been undermined by developments in the global environment, such as, inter alia, the world financial and economic crises, food insecurity and climate change, as well as challenges stemming from conflict and post-conflict situations.

17. The Ministers are of the firm view that, for economic growth to positively contribute to poverty reduction, it is essential that macroeconomic and social policies focus on job creation and social inclusion, as this will reduce inequalities and aid in providing social protection. Furthermore, the Ministers highlighted the need to invest much more, as a catalyst to economic growth, in infrastructure and interconnectivity and such basic services as health-care insurance and education while also ensuring that all people, including women, youth, the elderly, persons

with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples and people in vulnerable situations, have access to resources and opportunities.

18. The Ministers welcomed the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which was adopted at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, held from 13 to 16 July 2015 in Addis Ababa. The Ministers acknowledge that meaningful gains were attained in Addis Ababa as far as funding for development was concerned and that the reaffirmation of the principles of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development was foregrounded. There was, however, inter alia, a dire need for the development partners to meet their current official development assistance commitments and to upscale these in support of the aspirations that have been set under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Ministers reasserted that developing countries will continue to advocate for additional funding for development to be made available, with North-South cooperation central to these efforts.

19. The Ministers reaffirmed that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda are completely different processes in scope. They stressed that the means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development cannot be a substitute for, or be replaced by, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Rather, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda should support and complement the means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development contained in Goal 17 and in each specific Sustainable Development Goal. The means of implementation contained in Goal 17, as well as in each Goal, are an integral part of the Sustainable Development Goals, which constitute an indivisible set, as well as a fundamental component of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in their own right.

20. The Ministers noted that there remain a number of issues of principle that are important to and fully endorsed by developing countries that have not been adequately accommodated in both outcomes. They reiterated that developing countries have not abandoned and will not abandon their principled positions. They will continue to strive for a just and equitable world economic system with effective, credible, accountable and legitimate institutions in the spirit of multilateralism, to ensure that the global partnership for development is genuine and adequately resourced to assist in reversing years of chronic underdevelopment and poverty that continue to affect their populations.

21. The Ministers stressed the importance of never losing sight of the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals and the need to build on them, in order to leave no one behind. They acknowledged the crucial work ahead in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They reaffirmed that more can be done to sufficiently mobilize financial and non-financial resources for development through the revitalized and reinvigorated global partnership for development, with North-South cooperation central thereto. This will make a huge impact in bridging global economic disparities and inequalities that continue to characterize the current world economic system. They reiterated the crucial need for adequate financing and the importance for developed countries to demonstrate leadership and unequivocal commitment, in order to assist developing countries in finally eradicating poverty. The private sector should complement such efforts. Public international financing thus remains of paramount importance, where the North should play a prominent role.

22. The Ministers affirmed that States have, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and developmental policies, and the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.

23. The Ministers also reaffirmed that the right of peoples and nations to permanent sovereignty over natural wealth and resources must be exercised in the interest of their national development and of the well-being of the people of the State concerned.

24. While emphasizing the sovereignty of their countries and peoples over their natural wealth, the Ministers are also aware of the duty to conserve and sustainably manage and use these resources and ensure the conditions for nature and ecosystems to have the capacity to regenerate, for the benefit of present and future generations. The Ministers also recognized that the sustainable use of natural resources is an effective way to achieve economic growth while reducing poverty and environmental degradation.

25. The Ministers will work towards full and equal access to formal financial services for all. The Ministers will also work for the international system to ensure that the policy and regulatory environment supports financial market stability and promotes financial inclusion in a balanced manner and with appropriate consumer protection. The Ministers encouraged, as appropriate and in accordance with national laws and regulations, the use of innovative tools, including mobile banking, payment platforms and digitized payments. The Ministers looked forward to strengthening capacity development for developing countries, including through the United Nations development system. The Ministers will work to ensure that adequate and affordable financial services are available to migrants and their families in both home and host countries, including by reducing the average transaction cost of migrant remittances. In this regard, the Ministers looked forward to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

26. The Ministers reiterated that the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular the means of implementation, requires a revitalized and State-led global partnership for development. They therefore reaffirmed their strong commitment to the full implementation of this Agenda, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities, through the delivery of the means of implementation as contained in Goal 17, as well as in each specific Sustainable Development Goal.

27. The Ministers reiterated their position that developing countries should be supported by an enabling international environment, which includes a supportive and just international system where the rules are fair and pro-development, as well as a genuine and revitalized global partnership to enable developing countries to meet their sustainable development aspirations.

28. The Ministers stressed that an enabling international environment may be achieved through the provision of additional financing resources, technology transfer and diffusion with concessional and preferential terms, capacity-building, strengthened data collection and analysing capacity, pro-development trade policies,

equitable and effective participation of developing countries in global economic governance and adequate means of implementation for developing countries. They asserted that a strengthened and scaled-up global partnership for development is critical for developing countries in delivering the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

29. The Ministers reaffirmed the paramount importance of official development assistance in supporting the sustainable development needs of countries and regions, in particular African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and the middle-income countries. In this context, developed countries must commit to fully implementing their official development assistance commitments in keeping with their previously made undertakings and to upscale these efforts to play a meaningful role in eradicating poverty in all its forms. The Ministers called for the global partnership for development to be revitalized and reinvigorated.

30. The Ministers stressed that climate finance must not be double counted as official development assistance and must therefore be considered as separate from and additional to such assistance.

31. The Ministers recalled that sovereign debt matters should concern both developed and developing countries. This should be considered a matter that has the potential to adversely affect the global economy and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals if left unchecked. In this regard, the Ministers welcomed progress on debt and debt sustainability. The Ministers urged all United Nations Member States to further discuss sovereign debt restructuring and management processes, with active, inclusive participation and engagement by all relevant stakeholders, in order to nurture and strengthen these processes. The Ministers also reaffirmed the roles of the United Nations and the international financial institutions in accordance with their respective mandates.

32. The Ministers recognized the need to assist developing countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability through coordinated policies aimed at fostering debt financing, debt relief, debt restructuring and sound debt management, as appropriate. Many countries remain vulnerable to debt crises, and some are in the midst of crises, including a number of least developed countries, small island developing States and some developed countries. They reiterated that debtors and creditors must work together to prevent and resolve unsustainable debt situations. Maintaining sustainable debt levels is the responsibility of the borrowing countries; however, they acknowledged that lenders also have a responsibility to lend in a way that does not undermine a country's debt sustainability. They will support the maintenance of debt sustainability of those countries that have received debt relief and achieved sustainable debt levels.

33. The Ministers reiterated their concern about the activities of so-called "vulture funds" and their actions of a highly speculative nature, which pose a risk to all future debt restructuring processes, for both developing and developed countries. They therefore stressed the importance of preventing vulture funds from paralysing debt restructuring efforts.

34. The Ministers welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 69/319, entitled "Basic Principles on Sovereign Debt Restructuring Processes", on 10 September 2015 as an important step.

35. The Ministers stressed the importance of advancing a more development-oriented multilateral trading system in the context of a universal, rules-based, predictable, more inclusive, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system. This also includes meaningful market access for developing countries, stimulating economic growth and development worldwide, thereby benefiting all countries at all stages of development, in particular African countries, the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States, countries in conflict and post-conflict situations, countries affected by conflict, and countries and people living under foreign occupation, as well as middle-income countries, as they advance towards economic development.

36. The Ministers stressed the need to conclude the World Trade Organization (WTO) Doha Development Round in line with its existing negotiating mandates. In this regard, they highlighted the significance of the Tenth WTO Ministerial Conference, to be held in Nairobi from 15 to 18 December 2015, which will be the first WTO Ministerial Conference to be held in Africa. They also highlighted the importance of accessions of the developing countries to WTO based on clear rules and pre-established objective criteria. They also stressed that the processes should be accelerated and carried out without political impediment and that acceding countries should not be asked to make commitments that go beyond their level of development and current WTO rules: in this context, the principles of special and differential treatment, including through less-than-full reciprocity, should be applied. The outcome of the Ministerial Conference should reaffirm that the Doha Round can be concluded only when its development mandate is fulfilled. The Ministerial Conference should give priority to issues that will address the imbalances and inequities of the global trading system, including urgent correction and prevention of trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets, especially by developed countries, and seek to find balanced outcomes that will allow developing countries to effectively engage in global trade.

37. The Ministers reiterate the role of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in supporting and providing consultations, technical assistance and capacity-building to all developing countries on international trade and investment issues, enabling them to implement, among others, the Sustainable Development Goals.

38. The Ministers reaffirmed that technology is a key means of implementation and the most important lever of change for achieving sustainable development. Without a breakthrough in international cooperation in the field of technology, shifting to a more sustainable path would be very difficult and burdensome for developing countries. They recognized that closing technological gaps is an indispensable requirement for poverty eradication, as well as a key instrument for reducing inequalities within and among countries.

39. The Ministers welcomed the launch of a technology facilitation mechanism to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Ministers also expressed their willingness to work towards its early and successful implementation.

40. The Ministers recalled that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change. The global nature of climate change calls for the widest possible international cooperation aimed at holding the

increase in global average temperature below 2°C or 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels by accelerating the reduction of global greenhouse gas emissions and to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Looking ahead to the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Paris in December 2015, the Ministers called upon all States to work for a comprehensive and ambitious climate protocol, another legal instrument or agreed outcome with legal force under the Convention that will strengthen the multilateral rules-based system and address all the elements mandated by the Durban decision (mitigation, adaptation, finance, technology development and transfer, capacity-building and transparency of action and support), as well as loss and damage and response measures, in a balanced manner. The Ministers stressed that the developed countries, given their historical responsibility, need to take the lead in addressing this challenge in accordance with the principles and provisions of the Convention, particularly the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, and provide financial and technological support to developing countries.

41. The Ministers welcomed the offer by the Government of Morocco to host the twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in 2016.

42. The Ministers welcomed the adoption by consensus on 19 June 2015 of General Assembly resolution 69/292 on the development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. In this regard, the Ministers emphasized that the basic principle enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and in General Assembly resolution 2749 (XXV) applicable to those resources is that of the common heritage of mankind, and that a specific legal regime for the biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction needs to be developed in the form of an implementing agreement under the Convention based on that principle. Such an implementing agreement has to be negotiated as a package and must encompass the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, including genetic resources, and the sharing of benefits taking into account intellectual property rights, scientific research, capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology.

43. The Ministers recalled that the importance of oceans for sustainable development is embodied in Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and various decisions taken by the former Commission on Sustainable Development. Oceans, seas, islands and coastal areas form an integrated and essential component of the Earth's ecosystem and are critical for global food security and for sustaining economic prosperity and the well-being of many national economies, particularly in developing countries. The Ministers further recalled that, in the context of Goal 14 of the Sustainable Development Goals, targets related to means of implementation include target 14.a, related to increasing scientific knowledge, developing research capacities and transferring marine technology in order to improve ocean health and to enhance the contribution of marine biodiversity to the development of developing countries, in particular small island developing States and least developed countries.

44. The Ministers recognize that the United Nations Forum on Forests, with its universal membership and comprehensive mandate, plays a vital role in addressing challenges and issues relating to forests in a holistic and integrated manner and in promoting policy coordination and cooperation to achieve the sustainable management of all types of forests and of trees outside forests. They encourage other forest-related forums, initiatives and processes to cooperate with the Forum to achieve sustainable forest management.

45. The Ministers were determined to promote sustainable tourism, to tackle water scarcity and water pollution, to strengthen cooperation on desertification, dust storms, land degradation and drought and to promote resilience and disaster risk reduction.

46. The Ministers welcomed the offer by the Government of Ecuador to host the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in Quito in 2016 and, in that regard, decided to support the adoption of this decision by the General Assembly. The Ministers reiterated that the objectives of the Conference are to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable urban and rural development, assess accomplishments to date, address poverty and identify and address new and emerging challenges, as articulated in General Assembly resolution 67/216.

47. The Ministers reiterated their commitment and support to the guiding principles articulated in the annex to General Assembly resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991, as the founding resolution of the framework for the provision of United Nations humanitarian assistance. The Ministers expressed that international humanitarian actors should complement, not substitute, national actors and that any relief operation requires the consent of the affected State but that this consent should not be arbitrarily withheld. Finally, the Ministers stressed the importance of adhering to the provisions of international human rights and humanitarian law when providing humanitarian assistance.

48. The Ministers also recognized the importance of actions of humanitarian assistance as part of a comprehensive process of disaster risk management and the promotion of sustainable development.

49. The Ministers emphasized the critical importance of disaster risk reduction and building resilience in achieving sustainable development, especially in developing countries. They reaffirmed their commitment to reducing losses in lives, livelihoods and health as a result of disasters through the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. They stressed that enhancing international cooperation in the implementation of disaster risk reduction policies and strategies, in particular in developing countries, should be a crucial element in the post-2015 framework.

50. The Ministers expressed their concern with regard to forecasts that the world could be on the verge of the strongest "El Niño" phenomenon in recorded history, which would involve extreme temperature variations, floods and droughts worldwide and would particularly affect the most vulnerable populations. In this regard, the Ministers called for strengthening international cooperation to prevent major damage and ensure an adequate response and attention to the affected populations in a timely manner in order to ensure resilience to its impacts.

51. The Ministers maintained that, while there is increasing recognition of the central role of tax systems in development, there is still no global, inclusive forum for international tax cooperation at the intergovernmental level. There is also not enough focus on the development dimension of these issues. In this context, the Ministers reiterated the need to fully upgrade the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters into an intergovernmental body. This will be critical in transforming the current Committee from experts acting in their own capacity to an intergovernmental subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council, with experts representing their respective Governments.

52. The Ministers stressed that migration is an enabler of development. The roles and responsibilities of the countries of origin, transit and destination should be appropriately balanced. It is crucial to cooperate internationally to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration involving full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of migrants, regardless of their migration status, refugees and displaced persons. Such cooperation should also strengthen the resilience of communities hosting refugees, particularly in developing countries.

53. The Ministers recognize that international migration is a multidimensional reality of major relevance to the development of origin, transit and destination countries that must be addressed in a coherent, comprehensive and balanced manner. They endeavour to increase cooperation on access to and portability of earned benefits, enhance the recognition of foreign qualifications, education and skills, lower the costs of recruitment for migrants and combat unscrupulous recruiters, in accordance with national circumstances and legislation. They further endeavour to implement effective social communication strategies on the contribution of migrants to sustainable development in all its dimensions, in particular in countries of destination, in order to combat racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia, facilitate social integration and protect migrants' human rights through national frameworks. They reaffirm the need to promote and protect effectively the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants, especially those of women and children, regardless of their migration status.

54. The Ministers expressed their commitment to protecting the human rights of migrant children, given their vulnerability, particularly of unaccompanied migrant children, and to providing for their health, education and psychosocial development, ensuring that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in policies of integration, return and family reunification.

55. The Ministers, while recognizing the positive contribution of migrants to inclusive growth and sustainable development in countries of origin, transit and destination, reaffirmed that remittance flows constitute sources of private capital, complement domestic savings and are instrumental in improving the well-being of recipients. The Ministers stressed that remittances cannot be considered a substitute for foreign direct investment, official development assistance, debt relief or other public sources of financing for development.

56. The Ministers also stressed the need to further address and promote conditions for cheaper, faster and safer transfers of remittances in both source and recipient countries and, as appropriate, encouraged opportunities for development-oriented investment in recipient countries by beneficiaries that are willing and able to take such action.

57. The Ministers recalled the special needs of Africa and recognized that, while economic growth had improved, there was a need to sustain the recovery, which was fragile and uneven, to face the ongoing adverse impacts of multiple crises on development and the serious challenges that these impacts posed to the fight against poverty and hunger, which could further undermine the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals in Africa.

58. The Ministers expressed profound concern about the fact that the commitment to doubling aid to Africa by 2010, as articulated at the summit of the Group of Eight held in Gleneagles, United Kingdom, had not been entirely reached and in this regard stressed the need to make rapid progress in order to fulfil that and other donors' commitments to increasing aid through a variety of means, including the provision of new additional resources and the transfer of technology to and the building of capacity in African countries, and to supporting their sustainable development. They called for continued support for Africa's development initiatives, including Agenda 2063 and its 10-year plan of action, the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa. On the other hand, they welcomed the support that some developing countries had extended to Africa through South-South and triangular cooperation programmes.

59. The Ministers expressed their concern that the global financial and economic ongoing crisis is clearly undermining development in all developing countries and recalled that the modest development gains, in particular those in the least developed countries, made over the years are being reversed, pushing a larger number of their people to extreme poverty. Many least developed countries continue to be lagging behind in meeting most of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

60. The Ministers emphasized the need for the full and effective implementation of the commitments made in the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020. The Ministers further underlined the critical need for realizing expeditiously the renewed and strengthened global partnership for the least developed countries in order to overcome their structural challenges, eradicate poverty, achieve internationally agreed development goals and enable half of the least developed countries to meet the criteria for graduation from the category by 2020.

61. The Ministers reaffirmed that small island developing States remain a "special case" for sustainable development owing to their unique and particular vulnerabilities, including their small size, remoteness, narrow resource and export base, and exposure to global environmental challenges, including to a large range of impacts from climate change and potentially more frequent and intense natural disasters. Climate change and sea level rise continue to pose a significant risk to small island developing States and their efforts to achieve sustainable development and, for some, represent the gravest threat to their survival and viability, including, for some, through the loss of territory.

62. The Ministers reaffirmed the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA Pathway), adopted at the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, held in Apia from 1 to 4 September 2014, which represents the international community's renewed political commitment to the sustainable development of small island developing States. The Ministers further recalled that the Samoa Pathway

also set out new modalities for strengthened action on a range of challenges and priorities concerning small island developing States and demonstrated how partnerships with different stakeholders could be nurtured and utilized as one of the important means to implement the outcome document and build resilience to the particular challenges faced by small island developing States.

63. The Ministers recognized the special needs of and challenges faced by landlocked developing countries caused by these States' lack of territorial access to the sea, which is aggravated by their remoteness from world markets, and expressed concern about the fact that the inclusive economic growth and social well-being of landlocked developing countries remained very vulnerable to external shocks and to the multiple challenges that the international community faced, including the financial and economic crisis and climate change. They stressed the need for the international community to enhance development assistance to landlocked developing countries to help them to overcome their vulnerabilities, build resilience and set themselves on a path of sustainable social and economic development. They further reaffirmed the need to address the special challenges and needs of landlocked developing countries in structurally transforming their economies, harnessing benefits from international trade and developing efficient transport and transit systems.

64. The Ministers reaffirmed their strong commitment to the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, adopted at the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, held in Vienna from 3 to 5 November 2014, to address in a holistic manner the special development needs and challenges of landlocked developing countries arising from their landlockedness, remoteness and geographical constraints. The Ministers also reaffirmed their commitment to contributing to the renewed and strengthened partnership between landlocked developing countries, transit countries and their development partners for the full, successful and timely implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. The Ministers welcomed the Livingstone Call for Action for the Accelerated Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, adopted at the high-level follow-up ministerial meeting to the Vienna Conference held in Livingstone, Zambia, in June 2015, which highlights the key measures and initiatives required to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

65. The Ministers recognized that middle-income countries still face significant challenges to achieving sustainable development. In order to ensure that achievements made to date are sustained, efforts to address ongoing challenges should be strengthened through the establishment of a plan of action towards cooperation with this group of countries in order to strengthen the exchange of experiences, improve coordination and better focus support from the United Nations development system, the international financial institutions, regional organizations and other stakeholders. The Ministers therefore requested those stakeholders to ensure that the diverse and specific development needs of middle-income countries are appropriately considered and addressed in a tailored fashion in their relevant strategies and policies, with a view to promoting a coherent and comprehensive approach towards individual countries. The Ministers also acknowledged that official development assistance and other concessional finance are still important for a number of these countries and have a role to play for targeted results, taking

into account the specific needs of these countries. In this regard, the Ministers highlighted the need to make all institutional arrangements necessary to support middle-income countries within the United Nations system.

66. The Ministers underscored the importance of addressing the debt sustainability challenges faced by some middle-income countries, particularly those for which access to concessionary financing is limited.

67. The Ministers recognized that countries in conflict and post-conflict situations also need special attention. The development challenge posed by conflict can hinder and also reverse decades of development gains. Development finance can contribute to reducing social, environmental and economic vulnerabilities and enable countries to prevent or combat conflict situations. In addition, there is a need for aid to be delivered efficiently through simplified mechanisms, focusing on strengthening the capacity of local and national institutions while stressing the importance of country ownership and leadership in peacebuilding, social inclusion and development.

68. The Ministers resolved to take further effective measures and actions, in conformity with international law, to remove obstacles and constraints, strengthen support and meet the special needs of people living in areas affected by complex humanitarian emergencies and in areas affected by terrorism. In this context, they called for strengthening international cooperation and national institutions to combat money-laundering and financing of terrorism.

69. The Ministers welcomed the progress made in the implementation of various projects and initiatives under South-South cooperation in recent years and reaffirmed the importance of further strengthening South-South cooperation, especially in the current international economic environment, and reiterated their support for South-South cooperation as a strategy to sustain the development efforts of developing countries and as a means of enhancing their participation, including through sharing knowledge and best practices, in the global economy. The Ministers reaffirmed the Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, recognized the importance, unique history and particularities of South-South cooperation and reaffirmed their view of South-South cooperation as a manifestation of solidarity among peoples and countries of the South that contributes to their national well-being, their national and collective self-reliance and the attainment of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals. South-South cooperation and its agenda have to be set by countries of the South and should continue to be guided by the principles of respect for national sovereignty, national ownership and independence, equality, non-conditionality, non-interference in domestic affairs and mutual benefit.

70. The Ministers reiterated their position that South-South cooperation is a complement to, rather than a substitute for, North-South cooperation and reaffirmed that South-South cooperation is a collective endeavour of developing countries and that, consequently, South-South cooperation deserves its own separate and independent promotion, as reaffirmed in the Nairobi outcome document. In this context, the Ministers stressed that South-South cooperation and its agenda must be driven by the countries of the South. South-South cooperation, which is critical for developing countries, therefore requires long-term vision and a global institutional arrangement, as envisioned at the Second South Summit.

71. The Ministers call for strengthening triangular cooperation and, in this regard, invite all developed countries to increase their official development assistance allocations to finance triangular cooperation initiatives in order to ensure additional support to the exchange of knowledge, good practices, experiences and relevant public policies. The initiatives shall be defined by principles of South-South cooperation, such as solidarity, reciprocity, respect for national sovereignty, national ownership and independence, non-conditionality, non-interference in domestic affairs, shared governance and mutual benefit.

72. The Ministers strongly recommended the consolidation of existing mechanisms of South-South cooperation and called for the establishment of the United Nations specialized agency for South-South cooperation to be located in a developing country.

73. The Ministers highlighted the critical importance for developing countries of ensuring that the conceptual framework underlying South-South cooperation responds to the new and numerous challenges faced by developing countries through the exploration of new ways of thinking and new modalities, in line with evolving realities, thereby making it an important pillar to further strengthen South-South cooperation.

74. The Ministers stressed that the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation is the central multilateral policymaking body in the United Nations system to review and assess global and system-wide progress on and support for South-South cooperation, including triangular cooperation, and to assist in providing future guidance and direction on these issues for the benefit of developing countries. They urged all partners interested in supporting South-South cooperation to be guided by the principles and objectives of such cooperation established in such internationally agreed documents as the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, which was endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 33/134 of 19 December 1978, and the Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, which was endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 64/222 of 21 December 2009, as well as other relevant General Assembly resolutions. The Ministers therefore reiterated the Group's position that any policy debate outside the United Nations system should be guided by the agreed frameworks above and the Yamoussoukro Consensus on South-South Cooperation.

75. The Ministers also recommended that the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation be enabled to participate in the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination in keeping with its status as a separate entity within the United Nations for the global coordination and promotion of South-South cooperation for development on a United Nations system-wide basis, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions. The Ministers stressed that the Office is the articulator of South-South cooperation in the United Nations system and that the United Nations Development Programme should not duplicate, overlap with or undertake the system-wide functions and responsibilities of the Office. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of strengthening the Office for South-South Cooperation with human and financial capacity.

76. The Ministers recognized the need to mobilize adequate resources for enhancing South-South cooperation and, in this context, invite contributions in support of such

cooperation through, inter alia, the Pérez-Guerrero Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation and the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation.

77. The Ministers recalled the Development Platform for the South and invited States members of the Group of 77 and China to host brainstorming sessions of the high-level panel of eminent personalities of the South with a view to updating the Platform regularly, taking into account the evolving realities and challenges that developing countries face.

78. The Ministers noted that, in view of the mounting and intractable challenges that developing countries face, more frequent high-level meetings of the Group on thematic or sectoral issues, and with action-oriented outcomes, might be required. To this end, the Ministers invited members of the Group of 77 and China to make offers to regularly host high-level meetings of the Group on key issues of interest to the South. In this context, the Ministers welcomed the generous offer by the Government of Equatorial Guinea to host the Third South Summit in Malabo in 2016. They expressed their gratitude to the Government and people of Equatorial Guinea.

79. The Ministers renewed the invitations to all States members of the Group to consider hosting the thirteenth session of the Intergovernmental Follow-up and Coordination Committee on South-South Cooperation in preparation for the South Summit in 2016.

80. The Ministers approved the report of the thirtieth meeting of the Committee of Experts of the Pérez-Guerrero Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation contained in document G-77/AM(XXVII)/2015/2 and endorsed its recommendations. The Ministers commended the Chair of the Trust Fund for his continued commitment and expressed their satisfaction with the results achieved by the Trust Fund. In the light of the substantial decrease in the interest earnings of the Fund caused by the current world financial situation, as reported by the Chair of the Trust Fund, the Ministers appealed to every member State to make a significant contribution to the Fund on the occasion of the United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities, to be held in New York on 9 November 2015.

81. The Ministers approved the financial statement of the Economic Cooperation among Developing Countries Account of the Group of 77 contained in document G-77/AM(XXVII)/2015/3, as presented by the Chair of the Group of 77, and urged those member States that have not yet done so to make special efforts to pay their outstanding contributions.

82. The Ministers reaffirmed that the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly is the sole Main Committee of the Organization entrusted with responsibilities for administrative, financial and budgetary matters. In this regard, the Ministers requested that any budgetary, financial and administrative matters, including those related to the establishment of a peacekeeping operation or a special political mission, be discussed solely in the framework of the Fifth Committee, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.

83. The Ministers reaffirmed that any Secretariat and management reform efforts, including on its budget process, must not be intended to change the intergovernmental, multilateral and international nature of the Organization but must strengthen the ability of Member States to perform their oversight and monitoring role and that prior consideration by and approval of Member States is

essential in all cases where the measures to be implemented fall under the prerogatives of the General Assembly. In this regard, they recall resolution 66/257. They also reaffirmed the right of the entire membership of the United Nations to pronounce itself on the administration of the Organization, including on budgetary matters, and the need for continuous interaction and dialogue between the Secretariat and the General Assembly aimed at fostering a positive environment for the negotiations, the decision-making process and the implementation of the reform measures.

84. The Ministers strongly supported the oversight role performed by the General Assembly, as well as its relevant intergovernmental and expert bodies, in planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation. In this context, they renewed their commitment to strengthening the role of the Committee for Programme and Coordination. The Ministers also urged the rest of the membership of the United Nations to actively participate in the sessions of the Committee.

85. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of the strategic framework as the principal policy directive of the Organization and that its content should fully reflect the mandates approved by Member States, including the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations.

86. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of preserving the budget methodology, the established budgetary procedures and practices and the rules and regulations governing the budget process and stressed that the level of resources to be approved by the General Assembly must be commensurate with all mandated programmes and activities in order to ensure their full and effective implementation. In this regard, they underlined that the existing recosting methodology is a fundamental and integral element of the budgetary methodology agreed in the General Assembly and affirmed that the existing recosting methodology ensures that mandated activities are not negatively affected by currency fluctuations and inflation.

87. The Ministers underlined that the current methodology for the preparation of the scale of assessments reflects changes in the relative economic situations of the United Nations Member States. The Ministers further reaffirmed the principle of "capacity to pay" as the fundamental criterion in the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations and rejected any change to the elements of the current methodology for the preparation of the scale of assessments aimed at increasing the contributions of developing countries. In this regard, they emphasized that the core elements of the current methodology of the scale of assessment, such as base period, gross national income, conversion rates, low per capita income adjustment, gradient, floor, ceiling for least developed countries and debt stock adjustment must be kept intact and are not negotiable.

88. The Ministers stressed that the current maximum assessment rate, or ceiling, had been fixed as a political compromise and is contrary to the principle of the capacity to pay and is a fundamental source of distortion in the scale of assessments. In this context, they urged the General Assembly to undertake a review of this arrangement, in accordance with paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 55/5 C.

89. The Ministers emphasized that organizations that have an enhanced observer status at the United Nations giving them the rights and privileges usually applied only to observer States, such as the right to speak in the general debate of the

General Assembly and the right of reply, should also have the same financial obligations to the United Nations as observer States. In this context, they urged the General Assembly to consider a decision on an assessment for such organizations.

90. The Ministers affirmed that the current principles and guidelines for the apportionment of the expenses of peacekeeping operations approved by the General Assembly in its relevant resolutions should constitute a basis for any discussion on the peacekeeping scale. In this regard, the Ministers stressed that the peacekeeping scale must clearly reflect the special responsibilities of the permanent members of the Security Council for the maintenance of peace and security. The Ministers also recalled that the economically less developed countries have limited capacity to contribute towards the budgets of peacekeeping operations. In this context, the Ministers emphasized that any discussion on the system of discounts applied to the peacekeeping scale should take into account the conditions of developing countries, whose current positions must not be negatively affected. The Ministers stressed, in this regard, that no member of the Group of 77 and China that is not a permanent member of the Security Council should therefore be categorized above level C.

91. The Ministers express their concern for the growing restrictive nature of "earmarked" contributions within different United Nations entities, such as the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Office for Project Services and the United Nations Children's Fund, among others. They also emphasized that regular resources are the bedrock of those entities and are essential to maintaining and fulfilling their universal mandate and work. Hence, the declining trend of regular resources and a high concentration of earmarked funds put the Organization at risk of not having the capacity to deliver on its programmes. The Ministers appealed for assuring stable and predictable contributions and noted the important need to emphasize the quality, flexibility, predictability and alignment of such contributions.

92. The Ministers reiterated their support to the United Nations Programme of Assistance in the Teaching, Study, Dissemination and Wider Appreciation of International Law, established by General Assembly resolution 2099 (XX) of 20 December 1965 for the purpose of contributing to greater knowledge of international law as a means of strengthening international peace and security and promoting friendly relations and cooperation among States. They recalled that the Programme and its components are one of the cornerstones of the efforts of the United Nations to promote international law and that jurists, academics, diplomats and other public officials from developing countries greatly benefit from the regional courses in international law, fellowships, publications and the United Nations Audiovisual Library of International Law. In the light of their concern about the lack of voluntary resources to support the activities of this important Programme, the Ministers welcomed the provisions of General Assembly resolution 69/117 and expressed their commitment to supporting the inclusion of additional resources under the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 for the organization of the Regional Courses in International Law for Africa, for Asia-Pacific and for Latin America and the Caribbean each year and for the continuation and further development of the Audiovisual Library of International Law, as well as the inclusion in the regular budget of the necessary funding for the Hamilton Shirley Amerasinghe Memorial Fellowship on the Law of the Sea with effect from the biennium 2016-2017 in attention to the fact that voluntary contributions are insufficient for granting at least one fellowship a year. They also expressed their

commitment to including the International Law Fellowship Programme, seminars and regional training on international treaty laws and practice and legal publications and training materials in the regular budget of the United Nations, starting from the biennium 2018-2019.

93. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of respect for the universal realization of the right of peoples to self-determination, in particular of peoples living under colonial or foreign occupation and other forms of alien domination, which adversely affects their social and economic development, respect for the independence of States, national sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, including through the use of information and communications technologies, in particular social networks, contrary to the principles of international law, for the effective guarantee and observance of human rights, enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and embodied in the international covenants on human rights, and stress that full respect for the principles and purposes enshrined in the Charter and international law inspire full commitment to multilateralism.

94. The Ministers deplored the lasting and massive negative impact of the brutal military aggression committed by Israel, the occupying Power, in July and August 2014 against the Palestinian civilian population in the occupied Gaza Strip, which resulted in the killing of more than 2,150 Palestinians, including hundreds of children and women, and injury to more than 11,000 Palestinians as a result of the lethal, indiscriminate and excessive use of force by Israeli occupying forces, as well as the wanton destruction of thousands of Palestinian homes, vital civilian infrastructure, business properties, mosques, schools, hospitals, public institutions, farms and several United Nations facilities in Gaza. They expressed grave concern about the continuing obstruction of recovery due to the Israeli blockade and the resulting deterioration of infrastructure and services and stressed the urgency of reconstruction. The Ministers deplored the systematic, grave breaches of international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law, committed by Israel in this regard. They called for accountability for these crimes and violations and called upon the Security Council, in line with its Charter duty for the maintenance of international peace and security, to undertake serious follow-up efforts to bring an end to Israel's impunity and realize justice for the victims and to contribute to a peaceful and just solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

95. The Ministers reiterated their demand for the immediate and full lifting of the Israeli blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip, which constitutes the massive collective punishment of its inhabitants in grave contravention of international humanitarian and human rights law. The Ministers requested all members of the international community, the United Nations and other international organizations and non-governmental organizations to help to provide the victims of the Israeli aggression in the Gaza Strip with the required humanitarian assistance on an urgent basis. They also reiterated their call upon the international community to continue providing much-needed developmental and humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people, among them Palestine refugees, during this critical period, particularly for reconstruction and economic recovery in the Gaza Strip, including through the United Nations agencies present on the ground and providing vital assistance, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

96. The Ministers expressed deep concern about the further decline of the social and economic conditions of the Palestinian people as a result of illegal Israeli practices, which include but are not limited to the continuing colonization of Palestinian land by Israel, the occupying Power, in grave breach of international humanitarian law and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, as well as in flagrant violation of relevant United Nations resolutions and disrespect of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. In this connection, the Ministers demanded a halt to Israel's confiscation of Palestinian property, construction and expansion of Israeli settlements and the wall, demolition of Palestinian homes and forced displacement of Palestinian civilians. They also expressed grave concern over the frequent acts of violence, terror and incitement against Palestinian civilians and the destruction of Palestinian properties by Israeli settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and called for action to hold the perpetrators accountable for these crimes.

97. The Ministers reaffirmed their unwavering support for the just cause of Palestine and solidarity with the Palestinian people. They reaffirmed their principled and long-standing support for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the achievement of their legitimate national aspirations, including for freedom, independence, justice, peace and dignity in their independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and called for the exertion by the international community of the necessary efforts in support of these objectives.

98. The Ministers reiterated their call for the immediate and full withdrawal of Israel, the occupying Power, from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967 and from the remaining Lebanese occupied land. They reaffirmed their support for a Middle East peace process aimed at achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 425 (1978) and 1850 (2008) and the principle of land for peace. In this context, they also reaffirmed their support for the Arab Peace Initiative, endorsed by the Arab Summit Conference in March 2002.

99. The Ministers reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and of the population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources, including land, water and energy resources, and demanded that Israel, the occupying Power, cease the exploitation, damage, cause of loss or depletion and endangerment of the natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, which constitute violations of international law and severely undermine their ability to pursue sustainable development.

100. Recalling that 16 December 2015 will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX), the first resolution that specifically refers to the question of the Malvinas Islands, the Ministers reaffirmed the need for the Governments of the Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to resume negotiations in accordance with the principles and the objectives of the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, in order to find, as soon as possible, a peaceful solution to the sovereignty dispute relating to the question of the Malvinas Islands, which seriously damages the economic capacities of the Argentine Republic and the need for both parties to refrain from taking decisions that would imply introducing

unilateral modifications in the situation while the islands are going through the process recommended by the General Assembly.

101. Highlighting the right of the States members of the Group of 77 to permanent sovereignty over their energy resources, the Ministers expressed the view that the operations carried out by companies not authorized by the Argentine Government in the Malvinas Islands area relating to the exploration of natural resources, especially hydrocarbon resources, are seriously detrimental to the sovereignty rights of the Argentine Republic over its continental shelf.

102. In this regard, the Ministers recognized the right of the Argentine Republic to take legal actions with full respect for international law and relevant resolutions against unauthorized hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation activities in the referred area.

103. The Ministers reaffirmed the need to find a peaceful solution to the sovereignty issues facing developing countries, including the dispute over the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, which was unlawfully excised by the United Kingdom from the territory of Mauritius, prior to independence, in violation of international law and General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 and 2066 (XX) of 16 December 1965. Failure to resolve these decolonization and sovereignty issues would seriously damage and undermine the development and economic capacities and prospects of developing countries. In this regard, the Ministers note with great concern that, despite strong opposition from Mauritius, the United Kingdom purported to establish a "marine protected area" around the Chagos Archipelago, which contravenes international law and further impedes the exercise by Mauritius of its sovereign rights over the archipelago and the right of return of Mauritius citizens who were forcibly removed from the archipelago by the United Kingdom.

104. The Ministers emphasized that transnational corporations have a responsibility to respect all human rights and should refrain from causing environmental degradation and environmental disasters and affecting the well-being of peoples.

105. The Ministers took note of the holding of the first session of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on Transnational Corporations and other Business Enterprises with respect to Human Rights, held in Geneva from 6 to 10 July 2015, and encourage all member States to participate actively and constructively in the fulfilment of the Working Group's mandate in the upcoming sessions.

106. The Ministers reaffirmed their firm rejection of the imposition of laws and regulations with extraterritorial impact and all other forms of coercive economic measures, including unilateral sanctions, against developing countries and reiterate the urgent need to eliminate them immediately. They emphasized that such actions not only undermine the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international law but also severely threaten the freedom of trade and investment. The Ministers therefore called upon the international community to adopt urgent and effective measures to eliminate the use of unilateral coercive economic measures against developing countries.

107. The Ministers expressed their strongest rejection of the implementation of unilateral coercive measures and reiterated their solidarity with Cuba. As they welcomed the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Cuba and the United States of America, they reaffirmed their call upon the

Government of the United States to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on that sisterly nation for more than five decades. The Ministers encouraged the President of the United States of America to take all actions within his executive powers to substantially modify the application of the blockade against Cuba and the United States Congress to initiate, as soon as possible, a discussion on removing it.

108. The Ministers reaffirmed their rejection of the unilateral economic sanctions imposed on the Sudan, which have a negative impact on the development and prosperity of the people of the Sudan, and in this regard called for an immediate lifting of those sanctions.

109. The Ministers reaffirmed their rejection of the unilateral economic sanctions imposed on the Islamic Republic of Iran, which have a negative impact on the development and prosperity of the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and in this regard called for an immediate lifting of those sanctions.

110. The Ministers reaffirmed their rejection of the unilateral economic sanctions imposed on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which have a negative impact on the development and prosperity of this country, and in this regard emphasized the importance of dialogue and called for an immediate lifting of those sanctions.

111. The Ministers reaffirmed their rejection of the unilateral economic sanctions imposed on the Syrian Arab Republic, which have a negative impact on the development and prosperity of the people of Syria, and in this regard called for an immediate lifting of those sanctions.

112. The Ministers expressed their deep appreciation to South Africa for its able leadership and for its excellent work and tireless efforts as the Chair country of the Group of 77 for 2015. As 2015 proved to be a challenging year for all developing countries, the commitment shown by South Africa as Chair country in pursuing the goals and objectives of the Group of 77 was a source of profound gratitude. The Ministers also commended the efficient work and continued valuable support provided by the secretariat of the Group of 77 in New York to the Chair country and to the member States and congratulated the Executive Secretary of the Group of 77 on the achievement award presented to him during the opening ceremony of the ministerial meeting in recognition of his outstanding performance and his continued commitment and dedication to the goals and objectives of the Group of 77.

113. The Ministers warmly welcomed the election by acclamation of the Kingdom of Thailand as Chair of the Group of 77 for 2016.